United Nations E/2018/NGO/3

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
29 May 2018

Original: English

2018 session
28 July 2017–27 July 2018
Agenda item 5
High-level segment

Statement submitted by Confédération des organisations familiales de l'Union européenne, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-08598 (E) 080618

Please recycle

Statement

"From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities"

I. Introduction

COFACE Families Europe is a pluralistic network of civil society associations representing the interests of all families without discrimination. With 58 member organisations in 23 countries, COFACE represents more than 25 million families in Europe. It advocates at European level for policies of non-discrimination and equal opportunities between persons and between family forms, and specifically supports policies to increase equality between women and men. COFACE is supported under the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI).

For COFACE, building sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) goes through, inter alia, building community-based support services for families both in urban and rural areas.

II. The role of community-based services to support sustainable and resilient societies

COFACE notes with concern the lack of adequate, accessible, community-based support services for persons with disabilities and with other support needs in most EU Member States, with special regard to person-centred schemes, like personal budget, or personal assistance. In some countries, there have been major cuts on personal assistance services due to the 2008 economic crisis and the recession. Family members are often filling the gap of social service provision, however, relying on their unpaid workforce is not a sustainable solution to create inclusive and prosperous societies in Europe. There is also a strong gender dimension: the results of our stocktaking study showed that two thirds of family carers are women. The lack of accessible care services for children, older persons, persons with complex needs, or with chronic illness often hinders the labour market inclusion of family carers. Furthermore, family carers are left without financial, or social recognition, social insurance, pension scheme, or real opportunities to return to the labour market.

In-home support services, in-home nursing care, respite, or personal assistance are preferred forms of support service provision by family carers and by their relatives with support needs. Members of COFACE Families Europe consider that the availability of such services would relieve family carers from the intensive care responsibilities and would ensure that their relatives can live independently in the community while receiving high-quality support. We expect the EU to continue investment in the transition from institutional care to community-based services across Member States in the next funding period 2021–2027.

III. Conclusions

The current situation, in which 80% of care work in Europe falls on family carers, who are left without adequate financial compensation, social rights, or a pension scheme, is not sustainable. Families play an important role in preventing the institutionalization of their relatives with support needs. Families should receive adequate support to enjoy their life in dignity both in urban and rural communities.

Investment in 21st century good quality, accessible community-based social services and family support measures, with special regard to work-life balance policies would contribute greatly to the social inclusion and wellbeing of all families.